

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 145052

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TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
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PAGE 02 STATE 145052

TAGS: TQ, PGOV

SUBJECT: NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS PLEBISCITE ON US COMMON-
WEALTH STATUS

REF: A-1321 OF FEB 28, 1975

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

HICOMTERPACIS FOR HICOM AND STATUS LNO

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF BACKGROUND FACT SHEET ON UN-OBSERVED
PLEBISCITE HELD IN NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS ON JUNE 17.

BEGIN TEXT:

NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS VOTES DECISIVELY IN FAVOR OF US
COMMONWEALTH STATUS

WITH BUT A FEW ABSENTEE BALLOTS TO COUNT, THE PEOPLE OF THE
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC HAVE VOTED
OVERWHELMINGLY IN FAVOR OF POLITICAL UNION WITH THE UNITED
STATES IN A UNITED NATIONS OBSERVED PLEBISCITE HELD ON
JUNE 17, 1975.

ACCORDING TO A REPORT FROM SAIPAN FROM ERWIN D. CANHAM,
THE PLEBISCITE COMMISSIONER, MORE THAN 75 OF THOSE
CASTING BALLOTS VOTED YESTERDAY TO APPROVE A "COVENANT TO
ESTABLISH A COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS"
IN POLITICAL UNION WITH AND UNDER THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE
UNITED STATES. THIS COVENANT, NEGOTIATED OVER THE PAST
TWO YEARS, WAS SIGNED ON FEBRUARY 15, 1975 BY THE MARIANAS
POLITICAL STATUS COMMISSION FOR THE MARIANAS AND BY THE
PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE, AMBASSADOR F. HAYDN
WILLIAMS, FOR THE UNITED STATES.

THE COMMONWEALTH COVENANT WILL NOW BE SUBMITTED TO THE
CONGRESS BY PRESIDENT FORD FOR THE APPROVAL OF BOTH THE
HOUSE AND THE SENATE. IF APPROVED THE NORTHERN MARIANAS,
MADE UP OF 14 ISLANDS LYING NORTH OF GUAM, WILL BECOME
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 145052

A SELF-GOVERNING AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH UNDER ITS OWN CON-
STITUTION, WITH ITS OWN ELECTED EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATURE
AND ITS OWN LOCAL COURTS. ITS 14,000 INHABITANTS WILL
BECOME AMERICAN CITIZENS WHEN THE NORTHERN MARIANAS BECOME
A COMMONWEALTH UPON THE TERMINATION OF THE EXISTING
TRUSTEESHIP AGREEMENT EXCEPT FOR THOSE WHO PREFER TO BE-
COME NATIONALS OF THE UNITED STATES.

THE JUNE 17 VOTE IN THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS WAS PRE-
CEDED BY AN IMPARTIAL PLEBISCITE EDUCATION PROGRAM UNDER
THE DIRECTION OF A PLEBISCITE COMMISSIONER, WITH THE COV-
ENANT AND OTHER DOCUMENTS TRANSLATED INTO CHAMORRO AND
CAROLINIAN FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING
POPULATION. THE PROPONENTS AND OPPONENTS OF THE COMMON-

WEALTH PROPOSAL WERE GIVEN EQUAL TIME ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT RADIO AND THE SAIPAN COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATION. VIGOROUS CAMPAIGNING WAS ALSO CONDUCTED FROM VILLAGE TO VILLAGE ON THE THREE MAJOR ISLANDS OF SAIPAN, TINIAN AND ROTA.

ON ANOTHER JUNE DAY, THIRTY-ONE YEARS AGO, IN THE COURSE OF A WORLD-WIDE WAR, AMERICAN FORCES STORMED ASHORE ON SAIPAN. YESTERDAY, A GENERATION LATER, IN AN OPEN ACT OF SELF-DETERMINATION, THE PEOPLE WENT TO THE POLLS AND APPROVED THE COVENANT LEADING TO AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP AND SOVEREIGNTY. THIS ACT MARKED THE END OF A LONG QUEST FOR UNION WITH THE UNITED STATES. SOME TWENTY-FIVE YEARS HAVE ELAPSED SINCE THE FIRST RESOLUTIONS AND PETITIONS WERE PASSED AND CIRCULATED, REQUESTING THE UNITED STATES TO MAKE THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS A US POSSESSION OR TERRITORY. IN THE INTERVENING YEARS, THROUGH REFERENDUMS AND LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS, THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS CONTINUED TO APPEAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND TO THE UNITED STATES TO TERMINATE THE UN TRUSTEESHIP IN FAVOR OF PERMANENT POLITICAL ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED STATES. THE COVENANT WHICH WAS FINALLY AGREED TO AND APPROVED YESTERDAY BY THE PEOPLE IS SIMILAR IN MANY IMPORTANT RESPECTS TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH GUAM AND WITH PUERTO RICO. THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS WILL BE SELF-GOVERNING WITH RESPECT TO LOCAL AFFAIRS AS IS THE CASE WITH THE OTHER TERRITORIES. SIMILARLY CERTAIN BASIC PROVISIONS

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 145052

OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION WILL APPLY. FEDERAL LAWS APPLICABLE TO GUAM AND PUERTO RICO WILL ALSO APPLY IN THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS. FEDERAL TAXES WILL BE COLLECTED IN THE NORTHERN MARIANAS BUT WILL BE REBATED TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AS THEY ARE IN GUAM.

THE FINANCIAL PROVISIONS OF THE COVENANT CALL FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS FOR GENERAL BUDGETARY PROGRAMS AND FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LOANS. FOR THE FIRST SEVEN YEARS THE TOTAL OF GRANT ASSISTANCE WILL BE \$14 MILLION ANNUALLY AND AFTER THAT PERIOD OF TIME ANNUAL SUPPORT WILL CONTINUE AT THE SAME LEVEL UNLESS AND UNTIL CHANGED BY THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS.

THE PUBLIC LANDS NOW HELD IN TRUST BY THE UNITED STATES AS THE ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY UNDER THE TRUSTEESHIP AGREEMENT WILL BE RETURNED TO LOCAL MARIANAN CONTROL TO BE HELD FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS. THE COVENANT PROTECTS ALL LANDS IN THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS AGAINST ALIENATION, SINCE UNDER ITS TERMS OWNERSHIP OF LAND WILL BE LIMITED FOR THE FIRST 25 YEARS FOLLOWING THE COMING INTO FORCE OF THE NEW COMMONWEALTH, TO THOSE OF

MARIANAN ANCESTRY ONLY -- THE CHAMORROS AND THE CAROLINIANS.

UNDER THE TERMS OF THE COVENANT THE UNITED STATES WILL HAVE LEASEHOLD RIGHTS FOR 50 YEARS RENEWABLE FOR ANOTHER 50 YEARS FOR THE USE OF A SMALL UNINHABITED ISLAND, FARALLON DE MEDINILLA, FOR AERIAL BOMBING AND SHIP-TO-SHORE GUNNERY PRACTICE. IT WILL ALSO HAVE THE SAME LEASEHOLD RIGHTS TO 177 ACRES IN THE TANAPAG HARBOR AREA ON SAIPAN FOR USE IN THE EVENT OF SOME FUTURE MILITARY CONTINGENCY. IN THE MEANTIME 44 ACRES OF THIS LAND WILL BE LEASED BACK TO THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH FOR CIVILIAN HARBOR-RELATED ACTIVITIES. THE REMAINDER OF THE LAND WILL BE CONVERTED INTO A PUBLIC PARK AS AN AMERICAN MEMORIAL TO THOSE AMERICAN SERVICEMEN WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE MARIANAS CAMPAIGN OF 1944.

THE APPROVED COVENANT ALSO PROVIDES FOR THE LONG-TERM LEASE OF SOME 18,700 ACRES ON TINIAN ISLAND BY THE FEDERAL UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 145052

GOVERNMENT. AT PRESENT THERE IS NO PLAN TO BUILD ANY MILITARY BASE OR TO STATION ANY UNITED STATES MILITARY PERSONNEL

ON TINIAN. THE ONLY PLANNED USE OF THE LEASED LAND IS FOR THE OCCASIONAL JOINT SERVICE AMPHIBIOUS EXERCISES DESIGNED TO KEEP US FORWARD MOBILE FORCES AT A HIGH STATE OF COMBAT READINESS AND TO REHABILITATE THE HARBOR AND AIRFIELD ON TINIAN WHICH WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR CIVILIAN USE. ALSO LARGE AREAS OF THE BEST AGRICULTURAL LAND ON THE MILITARY RESERVATION WILL BE LEASED BACK AT NOMINAL SUM FOR CONTINUED AND EXPANDED AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES. THESE NON-MILITARY USES OF LANDS MAY BE TERMINATED IN CASE OF FUTURE MILITARY NEEDS. THE UNITED STATES WILL PAY A TOTAL OF \$19,520,600 FOR THE 50-YEAR LEASE (RENEWABLE FOR ANOTHER 50-YEAR PERIOD) FOR ALL OF THE LAND ON TINIAN, SAIPAN AND FARALLON DE MEDINILLA TO BE USED NOW BY US FORCES OR HELD FOR USE IN FUTURE CONTINGENCIES.

UPON THE APPROVAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH COVENANT BY A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE US CONGRESS, THE MARIANAS WILL BE FULLY SEPARATED ADMINISTRATIVELY FROM THE TRUST TERRITORY GOVERNMENT AND THE OTHER DISTRICTS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS. THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS, HOWEVER, WILL REMAIN UNDER TRUSTEESHIP STATUS UNTIL THE UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP AGREEMENT FOR ALL OF MICRONESIA IS TERMINATED AFTER THE OTHER DISTRICTS HAVE EXERCISED THEIR RIGHTS OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND HAVE FREELY CHOSEN THEIR FUTURE POLITICAL STATUS. PROTRACTED NEGOTIATIONS TO THIS END HAVE BEEN PROCEEDING, BUT MAY NOW BE SET ASIDE UNTIL AFTER THE FORTHCOMING MICRONESIAN CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION TO BE CONVENED THIS SUMMER. THE CONVENTION WILL ADDRESS THE CENTRAL QUESTION OF FUTURE INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS BE-

TWEEN THE CAROLINE AND MARSHALL ISLANDS, WHICH MAKE UP THE
REMAINDER OF THE TRUST TERRITORY.

END TEXT. KISSINGER

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